Effects of Benson's relaxation technique on occupational stress in midwives

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Abstract

Purpose: To examine the effect of Benson's relaxation technique on occupational stress in midwives working in a Labor and Delivery (L&D) unit.
Methods: This pre- and post-quasi-experimental study involved 65 midwives with a minimum 1 year of experience using convenience sampling. After training, the participants performed Benson's relaxation technique twice a day for 4 weeks.
Results: Occupational stress was measured using standard questionnaires of occupational stress. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. Statistical analysis was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test, Student's t-test, and Wilcoxon signed rank test.
Conclusion: This study demonstrated that Benson's relaxation technique may be effective in reducing occupational stress among midwives in L&D units.

Applying research to practice

Nurses know that practices must be evidence-based, but it is unclear how much evidence is required to make changes to practice. What is enough? For example, would research targeted toward healthcare professionals outside of nursing still apply? The technique described in the study presented here may be beneficial not only to midwives, but also to nurses practicing in various settings.

In this study, Jourabchi and colleagues implemented Benson's relaxation technique to reduce the occupational stress of midwives in their hospital system. Specifically, they found that those in the labor and delivery unit experienced reduced stress following the implementation of the technique.

Benson's relaxation technique has been tested in multiple settings among diverse populations for many decades.[1] Because it is cost-neutral for healthcare organizations and may be beneficial for nurses and other clinical professionals, I agree with the authors' recommendations to educate midwives about the use and benefits of Benson's relaxation technique. Nurses and other healthcare professionals can also consider implementing this technique with confidence in the evidence to support its effectiveness, but any new practices must be evaluated for evidence.

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STRESS IS A psychological reaction to an imbalance in an individual's ability and capacity to meet the demands and requirements of an environment.[1] It not only affects physical and mental health on a personal level, but it can also extend to organizations and professional environments, resulting in repeated absences and burnout.[2] Burnout refers to emotional exhaustion related to the cumulative effects of job stress.[3] By learning to cope and making lifestyle changes, individuals can adapt to stress and promote improved personal health and social function.[4]

Occupational stress refers to an individual's physiologic and psychologic reactions to job conditions.[5] It is a common problem and a serious threat to the health of the world's workforce. Although factors outside of the working environment play a significant role, professional issues represent another important factor in stress.[2]

Occupational stress can affect health, reduce quality of life, and increase the probability of work-related injuries.[6] As 2020 is the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, this article discusses occupational stress among healthcare professionals and examines the effect of different relaxation strategies, including Benson's relaxation technique, on midwives practicing in Iran.

Background

In Iran, midwifery is an independent field with a training program based on guidelines from the International Confederation of

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ment of staffing and resources, may affect the social functioning, job satisfaction, and general health of nurses. Additionally, a lack of essential resources such as equipment, medications, and lab facilities, as well as any feelings of insecurity related to obtaining and maintaining those resources, can result in increased occupational stress and poor patient outcomes.[22]

Limitations

This represents the first study to examine the effects of Benson's relaxation technique on occupational stress among midwives. However, one of its limitations was that it was not possible to examine the participants practicing Benson's relaxation technique at home. Another limitation was that this study applied only to midwives on the L&D units, which may affect how the results can be generalized. Additionally, the low clinical effect of relaxation may be explained by a short, 1-month period of intervention without follow-up. To support the findings, the authors recommend a large study with a longer intervention duration and follow-up.

Summary

This study indicated that Benson's relaxation technique may be used to reduce occupational stress in midwives on L&D units and is likely suitable for reducing occupational stress in midwifery as a whole. Because relaxation techniques are easy to perform and inexpensive, the authors recommend educating midwives as an effective tool to reduce occupational stress. ■

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